



### **Small Business Advocacy Council Meeting**

Thursday, December 14, 2006  
8:30 AM  
Economic Development Corporation

#### **Meeting Minutes**

**I.** The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m.

**II. In Attendance were:**

Lieutenant Governor Charles J. Fogarty, Chairman  
Lieutenant Governor-Elect Elizabeth H. Roberts  
State Senator Juan M. Pichardo  
State Senator-Elect Joshua Miller  
Dean Edward Mazze, University of RI School of Business  
Mark Deion, Deion Associates  
Denise Barge, RI MIDC  
Mark Hayward, US SBA  
Steve Adams, SBA  
Sherri Carrera, RI EDC  
Dennis Toprac, Center for Women & Enterprise  
Jim Hurton, Narragansett Chamber of Commerce  
Bob Lafond, North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce  
David Carlin, Northern RI Chamber of Commerce  
Paula Hopkins, Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce  
Jerry Meyer, East Greenwich Chamber of Commerce  
Jose Brito, Greater Providence Merchants Association  
Gip Cabral, Cabco Engineering  
Phil Pappoojian, Mereco  
Heather Singleton, RI Hospitality  
Kelly E. Carello, Secretary of State's Office  
Claudia Cornejo, Secretary of State's Office  
Ray Fogarty, Bryant University RI Export Assistance Center  
Ed Greene, Sage Business Consultants

Charles Newton, RI MBE  
Matt Stark, Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner  
Paul Tencher, Lt. Governor-Elect Roberts' Office  
Eli Zupnick, Lt. Governor-Elect Roberts' Office  
Vladimir Ibarra, Lieutenant Governor's Office

### **III. Approval of September 22, 2006 Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Fogarty called for the approval of the previous meeting minutes. A motion was made and seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.

### **IV. Comments from the Chair**

Chairman Fogarty acknowledged Lieutenant Governor-Elect Roberts as the incoming Chairman of the Small Business Advocacy Council and wished her the best of luck on her term.

The Chairman highlighted the numerous issues and legislation on which they had collaborated, particularly affordable healthcare for businesses. Lastly, Chairman Fogarty thanked the council for their efforts in the past eight years in fostering a stronger small business climate in our state.

### **V. Rhode Island Economic Outlook 2007**

*Dr. Edward Mazze, Dean, University of Rhode Island School of Business*

Dean Mazze paid homage to Chairman Fogarty as an outstanding professional and stated that it had been a personal pleasure working with him and his staff. Dean Mazze, as the Rhode Island Forecast Manager for the New England Economic Partnership sees a bleak picture as it relates to job creation in 2007 with only 2,000 new jobs. Furthermore, he said that the 20,000 jobs purportedly created by the Governor were nonsense. In fact, he stated that at best, there were only 13,000 jobs created and this figure could be as low as 9,000. The Dean agreed that one of the biggest problems for Rhode Island was that a lot of the decisions were made out of state. He cited Brooks, GTECH and Fidelity as examples where decisions were made in Pennsylvania, Italy and Boston respectively.

Dean Mazze believes that there is not enough attention being paid to middle and small size businesses which create the greatest wealth and provides the services that are critical to the community. New England states as a group are in bad shape but RI is in the worst shape, having the highest unemployment rate. Moreover, he stated that the New England region is one of the weakest in the nation. Lastly, as a positive, he said that construction is the fastest growing economic sector followed by health, education and hospitality.

### **VI. Update on 2006 Health Care Reform Legislation**

*Matthew Stark, Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner*

The Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner is trying to focus their efforts on 1-to 50 employees. He discussed as one of the major problems, the fact that small employers pay 10% more than large businesses. Mr. Stark explained how the legislation for 2006 focused on three areas. The Wellness Health Benefit Plan, the Reinsurance Program and Transparency.

## **VII RI EDC Update**

*Sherri Carrera, RI Economic Development Corporation.*

Ms. Carrera will be acting as the Business Advocate for the office of EDC. She discussed the Micro Loan Program and how extremely successful it has been.

**\*\***The SBAC members made a motion to thank and applaud Lieutenant Governor Charles J. Fogarty for his years of dedication to the Council. On behalf of the Council Mark Deion stated that it had been an honor working with Chairman Fogarty on issues that are critical to RI Small Businesses. The Council wished him the best and looks forward to working with him in some capacity in the future.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM.